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Adoption of the report of the Committee on its fifty-third session

Draft report

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Addendum

Reports of the Joint Inspection Unit
(Item 5)

Strategic planning in the United Nations system

1. At its sixth meeting, on 5 June 2013, the Committee considered the report of the Joint Inspection Unit entitled "Strategic planning in the United Nations system" (A/67/873), as well as the comments of the Secretary-General and of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) thereon (A/67/873/Add.1).

2. Inspector Tadanori Inomata of the Joint Inspection Unit introduced the report and responded to queries raised during its consideration by the Committee. The representative of CEB introduced the report containing the comments of the Secretary-General and CEB thereon and responded to queries raised.

Discussion

3. Delegations expressed satisfaction that the reports of the Joint Inspection Unit were once again being submitted to the Committee for its consideration after a gap of several years. In this regard, it was reaffirmed that one of the key mandates of the Committee was to assist the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly with coordination questions, as reflected in the recommendation adopted last year urging the Joint Inspection Unit to intensify its efforts to introduce relevant reports to the Committee.

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4. Many delegations expressed appreciation for the pertinent selection of strategic planning for the report of the Joint Inspection Unit and welcomed, in general, most of the recommendations contained therein. In addition, delegations reasserted the role of the Committee in strategic planning, in translating such planning into programmes and in ensuring the coordination of its application within the United Nations system. Delegations expressed the view that the report provided the Committee with a timely opportunity to strengthen its function in this regard.

5. Several delegations referred to the reluctance of certain organizations to participate in system-wide strategic planning, as referred to in the report, and they questioned how such planning as called for in recommendation 1 could be implemented. Some delegations indicated that a process of prior consultation, in order to ensure coordination of medium-term planning with the concerned specialized agencies, should have been implemented in accordance with regulation 4.9 of Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, and the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation (ST/SGB/2000/8).

6. Clarification was sought as to why the report presented a broad analysis of the entire process of programming, planning, budgeting, monitoring of implementation and the evaluation process rather than focusing on strategic planning.

7. Several delegations queried how an overarching strategic framework could be constructed to ensure follow-up to the outcome of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development, in particular towards the preparation of sustainable goals post-2015, anticipating daunting challenges ahead for the secretariats of the organizations of the common system, as well as for Member States.

8. Furthermore, concerning the post-2015 development agenda, some delegations stressed the importance of a more unified and consistent strategic planning process. In this regard, they reaffirmed the need to ensure the integrated system-wide support of the United Nations in implementing the post-2015 agenda worldwide in light of its intersectoral and interdisciplinary dimensions. With a view to setting up a coherent overarching framework, they pointed out the need for ensuring action at the global, regional and country levels, as well as for working across sectoral frontiers on the basis of common goals, jointly agreed strategies and platform-specific results. They also characterized the post-2015 development agenda as one of the greatest challenges to be faced by the United Nations system-wide in terms of coordination and strategic planning.

9. Some delegations expressed appreciation regarding the history of the strategic planning concept in the United Nations system, as defined and described in the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, including its origin and evolution over the years, and it was recognized that the background helped in reconciling the long-term perspective of the strategic framework with the shorter range plans involved in each organization's mandate. The Committee noted with concern, however, that the outcome of the review had concluded that at present there is a lack of strategic planning in the United Nations system.

10. Several delegations noted that the strategic framework is neither a medium-term plan nor a system-wide instrument and sought clarification as to why the United Nations had replaced the medium-term plan, with its system-wide scope. A number of delegations recalled that at the end of paragraph 44 of the report, the

Joint Inspection Unit had stated that in examining 2014-2015 strategic framework of the United Nations, the Secretary-General had proposed, and the Committee for Programme and Coordination had agreed, to reiterate the importance of the longer-term objectives of the Organization as an instrument of full achievement of its goals.

11. A few delegations noted the role played over the years by the medium-term plan as a principal planning document, enabling the translation of legislative mandates into programmes and subprogrammes and covering a period of up to six years. In this regard, the Committee noted that the plan was intended to cover the United Nations system. The Committee also recognized that the report aimed to present pragmatic tools and managerial good practices for better system-wide coordination that had already been adopted by some organizations of the United Nations system in specific sectors.

12. Some delegations expressed concern at the proliferation of "corporate strategies" or strategic plans adopted in house at the executive level without scrutiny by Member States. Notably, views were expressed that the application of somewhat sophisticated management concepts prevailing in corporate governance as well as across-the-board initiatives such as "Delivering as one" might not be of universal interest to Member States in meeting their needs for eradication of poverty and achieving sustainable development, particularly in the least developed countries.

13. A number of delegations sought information on the status of the five-year agenda of the Secretary-General as well as on the current work of the Change Management Group.

14. A few delegations sought clarification about the added value of harmonizing planning terminology, and questioned whether it would not be more valuable to produce a glossary reflecting diversity in the terms used in the organizations of the common system.

15. A few delegations expressed appreciation for the frank observations on the presumed impact of the Committee's working procedures on the planning process, which is not devoted to substantive debate but rather to textual concordance with the legislative basis for the formulation of the strategic framework. At the same time, other delegations expressed concern about the need for further review of the Committee's working procedures, and stated that neither the mandates of the Fifth Committee nor the Committee itself needed to be re-examined. They remained ready, however, to embark on discussions relating to changes in procedures and the tools and instruments used in planning.

16. Concern was expressed by one delegation regarding a degree of non-compliance by the Secretariat with the provisions of regulation 4.9 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation relating to the submission of proposals on the relevant portions of the strategic framework or its revisions to sectoral, functional and regional bodies for their review, with a view to facilitating the work of the Committee, despite the decisions of the General Assembly requesting their submission.

17. Many delegations shared the view that a strategic plan should not be budget-driven but mandate-driven. In this context, doubt was expressed about the possibility for the full implementation of mandated programmes under the current zero-nominal-growth and reduction-of-budget situations. Other delegations

expressed the view that the addition of results-based management dimensions to strategic planning frameworks would be a natural tool for implementing strategic planning. One delegation took a different view, questioning the comments of the Joint Inspection Unit on the "disjointed allocation of regular and extrabudgetary resources", and suggesting that strategic planning could not be conducted in a vacuum with no regard for resource issues.

18. Many delegations considered that the establishment of objectives and mandates of organizations is the prerogative of Member States and that the Secretariat must implement them. Furthermore, if system-wide coherence is ensured at the planning stage, the United Nations system would be able to avoid the duplication of efforts and waste. A few delegations emphasized the need for strengthening the function of the Committee in system-wide programme planning and coordination, including through enhanced consultation with the executive heads of organizations of the common system.

Conclusions and recommendations

19. **The Committee recalled paragraph 3 of General Assembly resolution 63/247 and stressed that setting priorities of the United Nations is the prerogative of the Member States, as reflected in legislative mandates.**

20. **The Committee also recalled General Assembly resolution 67/236 and reaffirmed its role as the main subsidiary organ of the General Assembly and the Economic and Social Council for planning, programming and coordination.**

21. **The Committee further recalled General Assembly resolution 67/248 and reaffirmed that the Fifth Committee is the appropriate Main Committee of the General Assembly entrusted with responsibilities for administrative and budgetary matters.**

22. **The Committee took note of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit, in particular the recommendations contained therein.**

23. **The Committee noted that the report presented a set of recommendations aiming at replicating the strategic planning of some organizations with a view to harmonizing or aligning the planning cycles of the different entities of the United Nations system.**

24. **Considering that the post-2015 development agenda poses one of the greatest challenges to the United Nations, system-wide, in terms of coordination and strategic planning, the Committee emphasized the importance of a more unified and consistent strategic process to its implementation, in particular in view of its intersectoral and interdisciplinary dimensions and in accordance with relevant intergovernmental mandates. With a view to setting up one integrated post-2015 framework, the Committee stressed the need for ensuring action and working across sectoral frontiers on the basis of common goals, jointly agreed-upon strategies and platform-specific results.**

25. **The Committee recognized that the further development and implementation of the results-based management may potentially contribute to the establishment of common goals on the basis of the priorities identified by the Member States.**

26. **The Committee recommended that the General Assembly request the Secretary-General to fully implement regulation 4.9 of the Regulations and Rules Governing Programme Planning, the Programme Aspects of the Budget, the Monitoring of Implementation and the Methods of Evaluation.**